

One of only 20 communities awarded as part of new EPA program

February 26, 2010

Media, PA —Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) congratulates Superintendent Jim Scanlon, his staff, the students of West Chester Area School District (WCASD), and the West Chester Borough community on being only one of twenty award recipients in the first round of the new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant program, Climate Showcase Communities Grants.

“West Chester Area School District should be very proud of their accomplishment and their role in addressing what is not only a national issue, but a global one,” said Congressman Sestak. “This project will expose students to the issues surrounding climate change, and give them skills needed to compete in a world where climate change will play an increasing role in the decades to come. This complements other local efforts such as West Chester University’s geothermal project, and while it is great to see local communities and groups taking initiative, it is disappointing that we, at the federal level, have not passed comprehensive legislation to set a strong and clear path to green our economy, transform our energy policy away from fossil fuels, and reduce our impact on climate change.”

In 2009, EPA created the Climate Showcase Communities grant, a competitive grant program to assist local governments in establishing and implementing climate change initiatives. The program aims to create replicable pilot programs of “community action that generate cost-effective and persistent greenhouse gas reductions while improving the environmental, economic, public health, or social conditions in a community.”

The program at WCASD is entitled, “The Student Conservation Corps: Building a New Energy Foundation.” According to EPA’s grant announcement, “the West Chester Area School District’s Student Conservation Corps will engage and incentivize the West Chester Borough business community to perform simple, no-cost conservation measures to achieve at least 10 percent reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Building on the foundation of an existing behaviorally based energy conservation effort in 16 schools, the Conservation Corps will create a team of 15 to 25 students to translate that model to the local business community. The school district also will broaden its district-wide operational efficiency program to reduce energy use and GHG emissions by 10 percent. The final phase, which will occur beyond the scope of the Climate Showcase Communities grant, will showcase the operational efficiency improvements to the business community.”

“The program funded by the Climate Showcase Communities grant will begin with the selection of a small group of high school students to form the Student Conservation Corps. The Corps will be led by two paid educators within the district who have already demonstrated leadership and expertise in the area of energy conservation. The Corps will provide targeted presentations to a representative selection of business in West Chester Borough. They will ask businesses to take an energy conservation pledge, and will help them track energy use and GHG reductions using the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and other tracking tools that were developed by the district energy consultant. The district's goal is to help local business experience the same energy successes as the district, and to shape a new paradigm of energy use that will lead to broader change.

“The Corps also will work to continue energy efficiency education within the school district. To aid in the education effort, the district's three middle schools and three high schools, which are responsible for 75 percent of total district energy use, will receive a ‘Building Dashboard’ that illustrates real-time resource and energy use in the school. The dashboard allows students to further their understanding of how their behaviors affect energy and resource use.”

“Additional efficiency projects in the school district will build on earlier conservation projects. Included in the work to be completed are investigations of HVAC systems efficiency, building lighting, and other facility audit functions, such as infrared scans of building envelopes. Total district-wide GHG emissions and energy use reductions are expected to be 23 percent by the end of the program. These energy reducing measures will then be modeled to local businesses, creating an ongoing potential to reduce emissions beyond the scope of the grant project period.”

As part of the fiscal year 2010 appropriation bill, Congressman Sestak was able to secure \$300,000 for West Chester University to transform the campus' heating and cooling systems from traditional power sources to geothermal. In June of 2009, he voted to pass the American Clean Energy and Security Act, comprehensive energy and climate change bill, but unfortunately the Senate has failed to vote on the measure. Congressman Sestak is also co-sponsor of a bill to create a national renewable energy standard calling for 25% of this nation's energy to be produced by renewable sources by 2025 and has called for its passage to help create short-term jobs and increase our country's long-term global competitiveness.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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